FBI Reveals NSA Tapping Of Sirhan Lawyer's Calls

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DETROIT, Aug. 2—The FBI revealed today that, through the National Security Agency (NSA), it received the contents of six overseas telephone calls and telegrams made by Detroit attorney Abdeen Jabara, former defense counsel to Sirhan Sirhan and a highly vocal proponent of Arab causes.

The NSA, part of the Defense Department, coordinates electronic surveillance activities and develops and breaks codes.

Jabara's American Civil Liberties Union attorney, John Shattuck, director of the ACLU's Washington office, said today that the Jabara case is the first in which the NSA has been forced to reveal the name of a subject of its electronic eavesdropping. U.S. District Court Judge Ralph Freeman ordered the disclosure over FBI protests.

The NSA has admitted in congressional testimony to intercepting messages of 1,680 American citizens and groups without court orders or presidential authorizations over a seven-year period.

The practice was stopped, according to court documents on an October, 1973, order from then-Attorney General Elliot Richardson.

A lawsuit brought by Jabara seeks damages from the FBI for 35 instances in which the FBI admits to wiretapping and recording Jabara's telephone conversations within the United States.

The FBI, by its admission, also obtained Jabara's bank records without a subpoena, watched his home and business, interviewed his neighbors and political and business contacts, and made phony telephone calls to his home to check on his whereabouts.

The FBI contends the telephone taps of Jabara were made in connection with a national security investigation and did not require court orders.

Newly filed documents reveal, however, only one case in which Jabara was suspected of criminal activity or espionage.

When Col. Yosef Alon, deputy Israeli air attache was shot and killed outside his Bethesda home July 1, 1973, the FBI questioned Jabara's Detroit neighbors on his whereabouts.

Jabara said today that he had been in his Detroit law office that day. FBI records show the bureau was apparently satisfied Jabara was not involved in the shooting because it closed the criminal investigation on Jabara the following day.

Jabara, 36, was born in Michigan of Lebanese parents. He has denied membership in any terrorist organizations but has traveled to the Mideast and spoken with Arab commandos.

Jabara supports establishment of a Palestinian state in Israeli occupied territory.

FBI records of surveillance on Jabara date as far back as 1967, when he spoke at an antiwar rally at Wayne State University in Detroit.

After the 1972 Munich massacre of 11 Israeli Olympic athletes in the beginning of Operation Boulder, a concerted anti-terrorist program ordered by then-President Nixon, surveillance of Jabara intensified, FBI documents show.

Agents or informers attended 23 public events where Jabara participated or spoke on pro-Arab or anti-Vietnam war issues. The FBI recorded 35 telephone conversations of Jabara through 13 undisclosed telephone taps. None of the taps was on Jabara's telephone but rather on the telephones of those with whom he talked, according to the FBI.

Information on Jabara's activities was also given by the FBI to three unidentified foreign governments and 14 federal agencies, court records show.

The FBI obtained approval for wiretapping Jabara's conversations from the Attorney General's office, according to court records, but it is unclear if the NSA received any approval for interception of Jabara's foreign calls and telegrams.